

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 ACDA-10

MC-02 EB-07 EUR-12 NSCE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 /087 W

----- 067211

O 020758Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1605

INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

UNCLAS PRETORIA 1114

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

USIAC

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: MELVIN LAIRD'S PRESS CONFERENCE JOHANNESBURG

MELVIN LAIRD, FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, INDICATED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AT JOHANNESBURG UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA LAST NIGHT THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD REVIEW ITS EMBARGO ON ARMS FOR SOUTH AFRICA BECAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DETENTE POLICY. UNDER A NINE COLUMN BANNER HEADLINE " ARMS BAN MAY GO" AND A TWO COLUMN SUBHEAD " U.S. MOVES TO REWARD 'DETENTE'" TODAY'S RAND DAILY MAIL FRONT-PAGED MR. LAIRD'S PRESS CONFERENCE. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF THAT REPORT:

" BECAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DETENTE POLICY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD REVIEW ITS EMBARGO ON ARMS FOR THE COUNTRY, THE FORMER DEFENSE SECRETARY, MR. MELVIN LAIRD, SAID LAST NIGHT.

" SOUTH AFRICA'S MOVE TOWARDS DETENTE WITH AFRICAN STATES HAD OPENED UP BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA MR. LAIRD TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN JOHANNESBURG.

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" ' WE ARE WATCHING YOUR FORWARD POLICIES WITH A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST.

" ' I UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAPE SEA ROUTE FROM AN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STANDPOINT' SAID MR. LAIRD.

" BUT HE WOULD NOT COMMENT ON WHAT AMERICA'S ATTITUDE WOULD BE TO SOUTH AFRICA IF RUSSIA AND CHINA MOVED FROM VIETNAM TO CONCENTRATE THEIR ACTIVITIES ON MOZAMBIQUE.

" AT ITS PRESENT RATE OF MILITARY EXPANSION, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE MUCH STRONGER THAN THE UNITED STATES IN FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS.

" ' THAT SHOULD BE OF CONCERN TO ALL NATIONS OF THE WESTERN WORLD. I AM VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SOVIET NAVAL BUILD-UP AND THE WORLD WIDE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.'

" MR LAIRD IS ON A PRIVATE VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA IN HIS CAPACITY AS SENIOR ADVISER ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS TO AN INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE. HE ARRIVED YESTERDAY MORNING AND WILL LEAVE FOR THE FAR EST NEXT WEEK.

" COMMENTING ON THE LARGE AMOUNT OF ITS GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT THAT RUSSIA SPENT ON DEFENSE, MR. LAIRD SAID THAT 80 0/0 WENT ON EQUIPMENT AND THE REST ON LABOUR.

" SIXTY-THREE PER CENT OF THE US DEFENSE BUDGET WENT TO PERSONNEL AND THE REST TOWARDS SHIPS, MODERNISATION AND EQUIPMENT.

" AMERICA'S AID IN VIETNAM DID NOT COMPARE WITH THAT OF RUSSIA AND CHINA, WHICH HAD GONE IN ' AT A TREMENDOUS RATE'.

" MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COST ABOUT FOUR TIMES AS MUCH AS IN RUSSIA AND CHINA, BECAUSE OF THE HIGH LABOUR RATES.

" MR. LAIRD FORECAST THAT THE WAR IN VIETNAM WOULD DRAG ON IN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

" ' I HAVE NOT SEEN ANY MOVEMENT TOWARDS DETENTE BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE U.S. AS A PRACTICAL MEASURE,' HE SAID.

" LIKE AMERICA, SOUTH AFRICA HAD TO FACE THE TREMENDOUS PROBLEM OF ENERGY COSTS. ALL THE FREE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY IN EUROPE, WERE GOING TO HAVE TO APPLY A GREAT DEAL OF DISCIPLINE TO THEIR ECONOMIES AND TO THEIR USE OF ENERGY." END TEXT.

SABC'S DOMESTIC SERVICE GAVE PROMINENT ATTENTION IN ITS MORNING DOMESTIC UNCLASSIFIED

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BROADCAST TO MR. LAIRDS REPORTED COMMENTS.

POST PRESUMES THAT IT HAS GIVEN EQUAL ATTENTION, AT LEAST, TO THESE COMMENTS IN ITS OVERSEAS BROADCASTS.

POST ALSO ASSUMES INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICES HAVE COVERED THE PRESS CONFERENCE EXTENSIVELY AND REPORTED THEM BACK TO AFRICA.

IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES YESTERDAY POST ADVISED THAT

MR. LAIRD WAS A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL ON A PRIVATE VISIT AND
USIS WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH DETAILS OF HIS PROGRAM HERE.
SHOULD IT RECEIVE FURTHER INQUIRIES TODAY IN WAKE OF THE PRESS
CONFERENCE USIS INTENDS TO RESPOND IN SIMILAR FASHION ABOUT
MR. LAIRD'S VISIT. REGARDING QUESTIONS CONCERNING USG
POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA USIS INTENDS RESPONDING THAT
POLICY TOWARD SOUTHERN AFRICA AS WELL AS TOWARD NUMEROUS
OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD IS UNDER CONTINUING
REVIEW BY THE DEPARTMENT BUT WE HAVE NO REASON TO EXPECT
ANY CHANGE IN CURRENT POLICY IS CONTEMPLATED.
DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER MAKING AN AUTHORITATIVE
STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT FOR USE BY THIS POST AND OTHER POSTS
IN AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE TO KNOCK DOWN POSSIBLE MISCONCEPTIONS
THAT MAY GROW OUT OF MR. LAIRD'S REPORTED PRESS CONFERENCE
STATEMENTS. ADVISE.
PETERSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PRETOR01114
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750113-0819
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750489/aaaaddft.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <08 JAN 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EAD " U.S. MOVES TO REWARD 'DETENTE'" TODAY'S RAND DAILY MAIL FRONT-PAGED MR. LAIRD'S PRESS CONFERENCE.
FOLLOWING IS TEXT
TAGS: SOPN, US, SF, (LAIRD, MELVIN)
To: USIA STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006